

Issues

for
RHODE ISLAND
MANAGEMENT



Published by The Rhode Island Office of Personnel Administration (OPA)

December 1989

AGENCY SAFETY PROGRAMS: A High Priority

Agency heads that make workplace safety a priority can reduce on-the-job injuries and protect their agency's most valuable resource: employees. By establishing an employee safety program, agencies can more easily identify and correct unsafe work practices, which, in turn, helps to increase efficiency, decrease absenteeism, and control losses to state property. Factors that contribute to an effective workplace safety program include office space planning, safety devices, and program promotion.

• Office Layout

The first step in implementing a safety program should be to analyze the overall set-up of the office, with the aim toward eliminating as many hazards as possible from the environment. While safety features are best incorporated during the design stage of an office, modifications can correct existing hazards in offices that already are in use.

Some common causes of workplace injuries, and suggestions on how office layout can help to prevent them, include:

-Falls — One of the most common causes of disabling injuries is falls. Falls on stairs, out of chairs, or from crowded walkways are less likely to occur, however, if furniture and equipment are placed against the walls, floor surfaces are durable and slip-resistant, and stairways have adequate lighting and sturdy handrails. Rolling ladders or stands should be provided in storage and filing areas so employees aren't tempted to climb on desks or chairs to reach top shelves and drawers. Also, place wastebaskets in convenient locations to prevent litter that could cause a fall, and mark any dramatic changes in floor levels.

-Overexertion — Employees may suffer strains and sprains from moving or carrying office equipment, supplies, or files. One way to cut down on such overexertion is to provide sufficient storage for supplies and files in each workstation, with room for heavy items on lower shelves.

-Collisions — This type of office accident involves workers running into objects or other people while walking. For this reason, aisles

should be at least 44 inches wide to provide easy passage for employees, and stair landings should be large enough to accommodate doors that open inward. Safety glass, which crumbles, when broken instead of shattering into sharp shards, should be installed in glass doors. In addition, glass doors should be marked with a stencil or decal in the center, about four and a half feet from the floor, to prevent employees from colliding with the glass. Convex mirrors mounted at turns in hallways also can help to cut down on collisions.

-Electrical hazards — Tripping over electrical wires can be prevented by having a sufficient number of outlets to eliminate the need for extension cords. Floor outlets placed under desks should be positioned so that they cannot be kicked or used as footrests. Moreover, any repairs or additions to office wiring should be done by qualified service people to protect employees from shock and fire hazards.

• Making Workstations Safe

Employees' individual work areas also should be addressed under the safety program, since a properly equipped desk or workstation can reduce the potential for accidents and injuries.

For example:

-Workstations should be ergonomically designed so that employees can adjust video display terminals, chairs, and other equipment for maximum comfort.

-Furniture should have rounded edges to minimize sharp corners, and plastic should be used instead of glass whenever possible.

-Office machines should be equipped with shields covering moving parts to prevent clothing, jewelry, hair, or fingers from getting caught.

-Nonslip pads should be placed under typewriters and other small office machines that could move and possibly fall during operation.

-Desk and file drawers should have safety stops and large, easy-to-grasp handles.

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Happy Holidays

CAN YOU BE A GOOD FOLLOWER?

Leadership skills are studied in schools, stressed in seminars and dissected in bestsellers. But if you lack the skills to be a follower — and many of us do — your worklife can be sapped by needless friction and frustration.

According to Robert Kelley, professor of management at the Carnegie-Mellon Graduate School of Industrial Administration, "Ninety percent of us spend 90 percent of our time as followers. Even chief executive officers have a board and shareholders to boss them around."

Clearly, the need for skilled followers is great. A typical manager may be on three or four project teams, as a leader in one and a follower in the rest. "If someone's leadership switch is always on, that person will run into problems," Kelley warns.

The problem, in part, is that followership has a bad name. Followers are widely — and mistakenly — branded as:

- Passive sheep who need help in even the smallest matters.
- "Yes" people who offer blind, unquestioning obedience.
- Malcontents who make fun of the group without really joining it.

— "Survivors" who ride the fence and play politics and never act until the safe move is obvious.

In fact, good followers are partners who work actively with their leaders to achieve a jointly beneficial goal.

Kelley has identified four essential qualities in good followers:

- They manage themselves well.
- They are committed to the organization and to a purpose, principle or person outside themselves.
- They build their competence and focus their efforts for greatest impact.
- They are courageous, honest and credible.

Kelley elaborated on these four qualities as follows:

- **Self-management and self control.** Good followers think independently and critically and are neither slaves nor manipulators of their bosses. They acknowledge that both parties have needs. They view the leader/follower relationship as horizontal rather than vertical — as two equally important people with different jobs. (How active or passive you are as a follower may, of course, depend on your own particular job, your career, your relationship with your boss and other dynamics that have to do with you and your specific workplace.)
- **Purposeful sense of commitment.** Good followers are committed to something. This may be a cause, a product, an organization or an idea. It's something they care about in their own lives and careers. This kind of commitment is contagious. Good followers are people whose hearts are in their work and this keeps morale high. They also act as a conscience for themselves, their leader and their group. If the leader proposes a path that is unethical or inappropriate, good followers say so.
- **Competence and focus.** Good followers master skills that are useful. They hold high standards of performance — higher in many cases than the work environment requires. Continuing education is second nature to them. They may take on extra work gladly but first they do a good job with their core responsibilities. They're good judges of their own strengths and weaknesses and contribute well to teams. Good followers see co-workers as colleagues rather than competitors. They also keep their contributions tied to what they care about and don't allow themselves to be sidetracked. If an assignment seems off-target or impossible, a good follower informs the leader at the start.
- **Courage.** Good followers stand up for what they believe in. They give credit where credit is due. They admit mistakes and they share successes. They form their own views and standards. Good followers also keep their leaders and colleagues honest and informed. It's important to remember that leaders and followers are roles, not people. Try to shape your role to the situation.



SYBIL SERVICE SAYS ...

"A most valuable talent is that of never using two words when one will do."

CONQUERING STRESS BEGINS WITH PLANNING

Among the top work-place stresses cited by managers in two recent studies are the telephone, meetings, procrastination and paperwork.

Here are tips for easing some of those stresses:

- **Organize:** Plan your work; keep lists; set timetables; set priorities. To decide what really must be done, ask: "What is the worst thing that could happen if I don't do this now — or at all?"
- **Use your resources:** An office assistant could do routine filing or copying. Delegate other duties to your employees to develop them and give you relief.
- **Do it now:** Develop the habit of taking immediate action.
- **Be assertive:** Politely say "no" to some requests or tasks that come your way.
- **Eliminate time-wasters:** Learn how to end conversations quickly. Set agendas and time limits for meetings. Read a book on time management or attend a workshop.
- **Be flexible:** Recognize that some things don't need to be changed. And all change is not bad.
- **Exercise:** Regular exercise that includes at least 30 minutes of sustained aerobic effort three times a week helps you combat the physical effects of stress.
- **Develop support systems:** Build relationships with others you can trust and share problems with.
- **Take breaks:** Stroll around the office or down the street. Take a coffee break, chat with a co-worker.

ISSUES

ISSUES is published four times a year by the Office of Personnel Administration, Division of Human Resources, Department of Administration, 289 Promenade Street, Providence, R.I. 02908.

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ANOTHER VIEW

CAN STRESS BE GOOD FOR YOU?

It depends on your perspective.

Stress. It's something everybody talks about. Whether it's a delay because of traffic jams, a tight deadline for preparing a report or flu going around in your son's or daughter's kindergarten class, it all gets labeled as "stress."

Generally, we associate stress with negative situations — work overload, family or personal crises, demanding bosses and the like. And we associate it with a mixture of unpleasant emotions — anger, frustration, anxiety, resentment and so on.

Instead of always seeing stress as pressure or tension, it may be more appropriate to think of it as "a push" arising from a situation that calls for us to take an action. It can have an effect similar to adrenalin, which prepares our bodies for action in times of excitement or danger. Viewed from this perspective, stress can be seen as having effects that are sometimes beneficial and sometimes destructive.

Many people work in positions that call for producing work under pressure. Assembly line workers, writers, advertisers, payroll clerks, and secretaries, among many others, often have to meet very important deadlines. Some find that the deadline itself makes them productive and creative. The deadline serves to stimulate them to apply themselves energetically toward the accomplishments of a particular task.

Think about a secretary who is preparing a crucial report that her boss will be presenting the next day to department heads. Ideally, the secretary will work hard and well to produce the report. She may be motivated to work through her lunch hour, or stay late to get the job done right. In such a situation, stress plays a useful, positive role and is probably not perceived negatively by the secretary.

Stress as a motivator

So, when stress acts as a motivator, it may seem welcome. If the same secretary finds she must make many changes the following morning before the 10 a.m. meeting, she may rightly feel that she can't do all the necessary work within the time allotted. As a result, her work may become less accurate or productive, as she rushes to complete the task. At the same time, she may feel resentful of the unreasonable demands made on her. The stress becomes destructive, rather than beneficial.

This phenomenon is known as the Yerkes-Dodson law of job performance. Yerkes and Dodson, two Harvard researchers, performed studies which demonstrated that stress at moderate levels serves to stimulate. At increased levels or maintained over long periods without release, stress tends to paralyze us, making us tense and reducing our productivity. The ideal, then is to maintain a moderate stress level, enabling you to get the most out of yourself without experiencing anxiety.

It's easy to advise people to maintain a moderate stress level, but in reality, most of us have peaks and valleys of stress. Staying up all night with a new baby for weeks, taking your high school senior through the process of college application or changing jobs can all be stressful times, but it is comforting to know that these situations will not last and you can say to yourself, "This too shall pass."

Excessive stress manifests itself in many different ways. It has been estimated that a third of all employee absenteeism is the result of stress.

In order to determine if you are having difficulty coping with stress, you may wish to ask yourself if you have some of the most

typical symptoms. Warning signs for stress include the following: sleeping difficulties, "acid stomach," recurring or frequent illnesses, ongoing fatigue, inability to concentrate, nail biting, irritability and increased intake of alcohol or other drugs.

While these symptoms may indicate other conditions, they represent common reactions to stress.

Stress and personality

The existence of "Type A" personalities has been well documented. Studies of heart attack victims have found a high correlation with people, mostly men, who are driven toward achievement on the job. They tend to be extremely focused on the task at hand, dedicated, single-minded and almost obsessively devoted to success.

With the emergence of large numbers of women in the workplace, another stress-ridden personality type has been observed. Psychologist Harriet B. Braiker notes that many working women are "Type E" personalities. Such people experience a high stress level because they try to be everything to everybody. They may feel tense due to the many and often conflicting demands on the job and at home. The effort to keep many balls in the air, to be competent in all areas, is a constant struggle.

Type A and Type Es have one thing in common. The cumulative effects of stress, in most cases, exact a high price in terms of physical and mental health.

When we start feeling stressed, each additional minor irritation or obstacle may seem much larger than it otherwise appears when we are more relaxed. If we maintain a sense of perspective, however, we may be better able to brush aside ordinary annoyances.

Michael Mantell, chief psychologist for the San Diego Police Department, advises, "Don't sweat the small stuff. If you keep it in perspective, it's all small stuff!"

A CLOSER LOOK AT TYPE E

The following have been identified as characteristics of a Type E woman.

Ask yourself if these common causes of stress apply to you and how you handle them.

- I often resent the many demands people make on my time.
- I have trouble asking others for help or delegating work to others.
- I have high standards for the way my home looks.
- I usually end up in charge of almost every activity I'm involved in.
- I'd like to cut down on some of my outside activities, but everything seems too important.
- No matter how much I do, I can't seem to get enough done to feel satisfied with myself.
- I'd rather do the job myself than show someone else how to do it and take the chance that he or she will do it wrong.

Agency Safety Programs

(Continued from page 1)

• Communicate Safety Policies

Management's commitment to the safety program must be clearly communicated to employees to encourage adherence to safe work practices. Agency heads can do this by enforcing safety regulations, monitoring safety performance, and training workers in safe practices. Supervisors, in particular, should receive safety training, as they are in the best position to communicate the agency's commitment to safety and observe employee compliance with policies and procedures. In addition, new hires should receive a list of safety rules, including written procedures for reporting accidents and unsafe conditions.

THE 7 KEYS TO LEADERSHIP

What makes a leader? Harry Truman defined leadership as, "the ability to get other people to do what they don't want to do and like it." Those in the "know" management consultants, corporate CEOs, largely agree that all leaders share the following seven characteristics.

1. Trust your subordinates. The high commitment organization pushes responsibility down the ladder and relies much more on the energies and talents of the entire workforce. If employees don't display much energy and talent, it may be because they don't trust the agency to reward those qualities, because the agency doesn't trust the workers to exhibit them.

Mutual trust between top executives and employees is the answer to making a high-commitment organization work. Taking the initial step toward giving more responsibility to lower level employees involves letting them have a voice in the decision making process. According to Ford Motor chief Donald E. Peterson, "Employee involvement requires participative management. Any one who has a legitimate reason, who will be affected by a decision, ought to have the feeling that people want to know how he or she feels."

Benefits accrue to agencies or departments that give subordinates more freedom. Employees are encouraged to act autonomously and many times come up with new and innovative ideas. More importantly, giving employees more freedom helps them become leaders who one day may take charge of the agency. Leaders are developed by challenges.

2. Develop a vision. Employees like to keep an eye on the future. They want to know where they're going and why. Ray Kroc, founder of McDonald's, had a vision of McDonald's many years before he founded the company. He invented the company motto — "Quality, service, cleanliness, and value" — and repeated it to his employees for the rest of his life. Stanley C. Gault, CEO of Rubbermaid says — "You have to set the tone and pace, define objectives and strategies, demonstrate through personal example, what you expect from others."

3. Keep your cool. The acid test of leadership is crisis. The best leaders are those who remain calm under pressure — they inspire others to act calmly and with intelligence. Leaders have to lead — they must take a position and if necessary, take charge, or face a credibility gap.

4. Encourage risk taking. Effective leaders not only encourage employees to take chances, they encourage them to be strong enough to admit their mistakes. The future of any enterprise rests on the willingness to take chances and the best way for a leader to convey that message is to set the example. F. W. Smith, founder of Federal Express lives by the quotation, "Fear of failure must never be a reason not to try something different."

5. Be an expert. Successful leaders do their homework. Employees are much more likely to listen to and follow their leader when they know that he or she knows at least as much as they do. If leaders are new to the field, they quickly set about to develop the expertise needed in their new area.

6. Invite dissent. An effective leader wants dissent — it encourages controversy and the expression of whatever is on employees' minds. An effective leader listens to both sides of an issue, listens to all the advice given, then synthesizes it, taking the best of all views. According to Addison Barry Rand, president of Xerox's U.S. Marketing group, "The higher you get in an organization, the more important it is to have people who will tell you when you are right or wrong. If you have 'yes' people, then either you or they are redundant."

7. Simplify. Really effective leaders are able to determine what is important and arrive at simple answers to complex questions — they're able to zero in on essentials. They see the big picture, set the course, communicate it and maintain it.

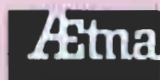
There are other characteristics that many leaders have that can't be taught — honesty, integrity, and a refined sense of justice. The most admired leaders have well-rounded lives, with an involved existence away from their offices. The final test of a leader is the C-word — Character.

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